

ONE TEXT, TWO RECEPTIONS:
MAHFOUZ'S *CHILDREN OF THE ALLEY*

by

Muhammad Ismail Muhammad Ismail Omar Ghorab

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Dedication

To my mother

You are the dearest person I have on this earth.

A unique blend of compassion, love, kindness, and happiness.

May Allah bless you.

Abstract

Received wisdom in translation studies tells us that both source and target texts should enjoy the same reception by the source and target cultures. However, Mahfouz's *Children of the Alley* has been negatively received in the East, banned in all Arab countries for alleged blasphemy over its allegorical portrayal of Allah and faiths, but positively received in the West, even the Nobel Committee referred to it when Mahfouz was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1988. Taking *Children of the Alley* as its case study, the aim of this thesis is to explore the reasons behind different receptions of the same text. The East-West duality is examined to establish why and how reception of this text is different. The thesis examines examples from Mahfouz's original Arabic text as well as its English translation by Peter Theroux. It may be concluded that the English translation of the novel seems to manipulate reception.

Thesis search terms: Reception, Naguib Mahfouz, Eastern, Western, Translation, Manipulation.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis relates to the contradictory receptions of Naguib Mahfouz's most controversial novel *Children of the Alley*. The way it is received in the East is thoroughly different from the Western reception although Mahfouz was born, brought up, lived and died in the East. This thesis puts into question the possibility of having an adequate translation especially when it comes to such genres that run deep into the roots and precepts of a specific culture. It attempts to establish whether translation has played a role in altering the reception of this literary work or not.

The thesis demonstrates the reactions of two different cultures when they receive the same literary work, and discusses examples from the Arabic source text (ST) of *Children of the Alley* and how they are translated into English and conveyed to and received by the Western culture. The thesis questions the relationship between Mahfouz's intended meaning in the Arabic ST, how the majority of Arabs received it and the translator's ability to understand and transfer culture-specific concepts and meanings by adopting manipulatory strategies of the translation process with the resulting reconstruction of the ST as a fit in the target culture (TC). For its purpose, the thesis examines how linguistic and cultural issues were handled through translation.

This thesis is divided into five chapters: Chapter 1, the introduction; introduces the topic and the thesis. Chapter 2 provides a theoretical framework that serves as foundation for the thesis, an overview of the most important definitions of translation and culture are provided, signifier and signified, translation as a process of intercultural transfer, translation

as adaptation and assimilation of foreign texts, are also examined in the chapter. The chapter ends by discussing translation of Arabic literature and outlines reception theory in literature.

Chapter 3 introduces the Eastern perspective. It begins by giving a brief background about Mahfouz, his novel. It then moves to the Eastern reception by outlining different opinions of scholars and writers who are familiar with Arabic literature, traditions, Arabic language and Eastern culture. Some of them lived in the 1950s era when *Children of the Alley* was written. The chapter concludes by providing the religious interpretation of the novel and why the Eastern recipient, Muslim mentality and traditions still find it unacceptable.

Chapter 4 introduces the Western perspective. It begins with a brief background about Peter Theroux, who translated the Arabic text into English. The chapter moves to discussing the English translation of the novel and how Theroux succeeded in creating the target text (TT) and making it ultra close to Western readers. The chapter then introduces the Western reception by considering how Mahfouz depicts Eastern cultural aspects in a way that makes them appear to stem from Western perspectives. The chapter offers supporting opinions of Western scholars and writers. The chapter ends by providing political interpretations of the novel and explains why the religious register fades away in the TT, becoming less effective than in the ST.

Chapter 5 concludes the thesis, summarizes its findings and provides some recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter sets the scene for the following chapters, it introduces the theoretical basis, by reviewing translation and culture and exploring cultural transfer and representation of Arabic literature, which are projected onto the Eastern and Western receptions of *Children of the Alley* in chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis. The chapter also reviews reception theory in preparation for the discussion that ensues in the rest of the thesis.

2.1. Defining Translation

Translation can be defined as a process translators perform on language and culture. The ST is the criterion upon which translators do translation. They need to analyze the texture of the text and explore the intricate network of meanings interwoven into its fabric. This is in line with Venuti's definition of translation as "a process by which the chain of signifiers that constitutes the source-language text is replaced by a chain of signifiers in the target language which the translator provides on the strength of an interpretation" (Venuti 1995, p. 17).

Venuti also describes the aim of translation as follows:

The aim of translation is to bring back a cultural other as the same, the recognizable, even the familiar; and this aim always risks a wholesale domestication of the foreign text, often in highly self-conscious projects, where translation serves an appropriation of foreign cultures for domestic agendas, cultural, economic, and political (1995, p. 18).

Translators try to recreate the ST to the best of their knowledge, they rework the signs and nuances, reconstruct the signals and symbols that recognize the ST and identify it so as to

put them into a frame within a certain context that as much as possible similar to the signs, nuances, signals, and symbols of the TT. Translation is the art of transferring a ST into a TT. It builds bridges that can connect people. Authors create something written that expresses their own ideas, beliefs, understanding, etc. Translators are also creators because they make a new text that emanates from the source version. Translators have a vision and a base that are inspired thanks to the authors. They change the clothing of texts and opt for a way that takes the target reader into consideration. However, they are not supposed to convey messages in different ways than the original messages of the original authors. The essence should not be changed, and the momentum of the new text should be a reflection of what the original authors intended to say. Translators need to comprehend the statements of the ST in their social contexts and render them into meaningful ones in the TT.

On a similar note, Oettinger refers to the process of replacing the elements of the source language by other equivalent elements in the target language through the domain of translation. Oettinger defines translation as “the replacement of elements of one language, the domain of translation, by equivalent elements of another language” (1960, p. 110).

According to Newmark, translation is “rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text” (1988, p. 4). Translators need to be aware of the message or the meaning the authors of the ST want the readers to understand. This is the task that shows the proficiency of translators in conveying the intended message to the readers of the target texts. Wilss states that translation “leads from a source-language text to a target-language text which is as close an equivalent as possible and presupposes an

understanding of the content and style of the original" (1982, p. 62). Similarly, Bassnett incisively observes:

Today the movement of peoples around the globe can be seen to mirror the very process of translation itself, for translation is not just the transfer of texts from one language into another, it is now rightly seen as a process of negotiation between texts and between cultures, a process during which all kinds of transactions take place mediated by the figure of the translator (2002, p. 6).

Catford provides his definition of translation as the replacement of textual material in one language by equivalent textual material in another language (1965, p. 20). Brislin defines translation as:

The general term referring to the transfer of thoughts and ideas from one language (source) to another (target), whether the languages are in written or oral form; whether the languages have established orthographies or do not have such standardization or whether one or both languages is based on signs, as with sign languages of the deaf (1976, p. 1).

Similar to the above definition is the one proposed by Nida and Taber on the translating process: "Translating consists of reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style" (1969, p. 12). According to Nida (cited in Munday, 2001, p. 42), good systematic translations must meet the following criteria:

- 1) Making sense.
- 2) Conveying the spirit and the manner of the original.
- 3) Having a natural and easy form of expression.
- 4) Producing a similar response.

The translation of أولاد حارتنا in English as *Children of the Alley* has not produced a similar response at all. One of Nida's very famous examples is taken from the Bible, the translation of "Lamb of God"¹ into the Eskimo language. It is agreed that the connotation of "lamb" is simplicity or innocence, but the Eskimo culture does not have the notion "lamb". So Nida thinks that the word "lamb" cannot symbolize anything for them. He opted for "Seal" instead of "Lamb" to convey the original message (see the discussion of the signifier and signified in this chapter). This is an example of the importance of taking cultural aspects into consideration during the process of translation. Different meanings and definitions of culture are provided in the following section to see how scholars consider the interconnection between culture and translation.

2.2. Defining Culture

Culture is a collection of beliefs, norms, customs, habits, principles, values, morals and traditions agreed upon and applied by a group of people living together for a long time. These people may develop acquired culture based on new circumstances that come from encounters with experiences with societies they interact with. Translators should view both the ST and the TT as being inextricable and inalienable from the cultures in which they are embedded. There are various definitions and interpretations of culture. Williams explains:

[Culture] is the one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language. This is so partly because of its intricate historical development, in several European languages, but mainly because it has now come to be used for important concepts in several distinct intellectual disciplines, and in several distinct and incompatible systems of thought (1988, p. 87).

¹ This example is taken from Professor Hatim's lecture on "Theoretical Models of Translation" in 2011.

Translators should command more than one language, expand their knowledge and deepen their cultural background, because the “cultural dimension of translation and its MDT (Master Discourse of Translation) generally leads to the reconstruction of the foreign text in accordance with values, beliefs, and representation that pre-exist translation in the translating culguage” (Faiq, 2010, p. 19).

Faiq also notes that translating is a form of intercultural communication, and translation is *culguage*, meaning a cross-language and cross-cultural combination of communication activities, not only the two languages but also the two cultures come into contact. Faiq says:

Culture refers to beliefs and value systems tacitly assumed to be collectively shared by particular social groups and to the positions taken by producers and receivers of texts, including translations, during the mediation process (2004, p. 1).

Faiq’s above discussion goes hand in hand with what Juliane House says about translation:

Translation is not only a linguistic act; it is also a cultural one, an act of communication across cultures. Translation always involves both language and culture simply because the two cannot really be separated. Language is culturally embedded: it both expresses and shapes cultural reality, and the meanings of linguistic items, be they words or larger segments of text, can only be understood when considered together with the cultural context in which these linguistic items are used (2009, p. 11).

In general terms, culture includes religion, history, values, social structure, and language. Translators consider the formation of different cultural traditions, unique histories, customs, habits and values. The carrier of culture and cultural expressions is language, which is the

means of communication. That's why real differences in the usage of culture and language that carries it between Mahfouz and Theroux can be spotted, e.g. Mahfouz says (p. 6):

كم دفعتني ذلك إلى الطواف ببيته الكبير

Any Muslim can easily sense the reference to الطواف بالكعبة (البيت العتيق), Theroux on p. 4 translates this into, "How often that moved me to stroll around his tall mansion." Mahfouz's use of the word الطواف is purposeful الطواف is a ritual in Islam. ببيته الكبير is a reference to Kaaba, which is the most sacred site in Islam, and which Muslims have to circumambulate seven times during Hajj or Umrah. The translation technique used by Theroux here is domestication, he used the word "stroll" which means as per the *Cambridge dictionary*: to walk in a slow relaxed manner especially for pleasure. So كم دفعتني ذلك إلى الطواف ببيته الكبير will give a certain impression of sacredness that is not as strong or effective as is in the English text, whereby "How often that moved me to stroll around his tall mansion," weakens the spiritual and religious atmosphere Mahfouz had intentionally created in the original Arabic text.

The problem of the Arabic version emerges in similar endless examples in *Children of the Alley*. Whereas Mahfouz's wording provides such religious and spiritual exegesis, Theroux's wording does not produce a similar response in terms of religious beliefs, yet it may reflect a similar reaction in terms of the novel's literary value. This makes the English text reads English; Theroux is invisible and has a fluent rendering that fits with the Western views.

Providing explanation for the translation process, Venuti (1995) uses the term domestication, about which he writes:

Domestication dominates Anglo-American translation culture. It involves an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values. This

strategy of translation promotes transparency, fluency and invisibility when translating in order to reduce the foreignness of the target-text. It is also selective about the texts to translate, always choosing texts that are likely to lend themselves to such a strategy, thus, following domestic literary standards (cited in Munday, 2001, p. 146).

Cultural gaps may constitute many obstacles for translators. Each nation, country, society or even a group of people living together for some time tends to develop their own culture based on common beliefs, history, behaviors, customs, traditions, religion, ... etc. This is in accordance with what Peck says:

Culture is all the accepted and patterned ways of behavior of a given people. It is that facet of human life learned by people as a result of belonging to some particular group; it is that part of learned behavior shared with others ... without the study of culture, foreign language instruction is inaccurate and incomplete (1998, p. 1).

Similarly, Peck's observation mirrors what Ward Goodenough says about culture:

A society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members, and do so in any role that they accept for any one of themselves. Culture, being what people have to learn as distinct from their biological heritage, must consist of the end product of learning: knowledge, in a most general, if relative, sense of the term. By definition, we should note that culture is not material phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people, behavior, or emotions. It is rather an organization of these things. It is the forms of things that people have in mind, their models of perceiving and dealing with their circumstances. To one who knows their culture, these things and events are also signs

signifying the cultural forms or models of which they are material representation (1964, p. 36).

Furthermore, Fleet describes culture as what a specific community accepts concerning its members' patterns of behavior, and as participating in a discourse by members who share a common social space, common history and common thoughts. Fleet finds that culture is a system of symbols, meanings, and norms passed from one generation to the next, which differentiates groups of people united by certain characteristics such as origin, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, socioeconomic class, or political views (Fleet, 2006, p. 6).

Newmark categorizes cultural words as follows:

- a) Ecology – flora, fauna, winds, plains, hills
- b) Material culture
 - Food
 - Clothes
 - Houses and towns
 - Transport
- c) Social culture – work and leisure
- d) Organizations, customs, activities, procedures, concepts
 - Political and administrative
 - Religious
 - Artistic
- e) Gestures and habits (1988, p. 95) (adapted).

The question that poses itself in the process of translation is how culture can be transferred and what are the requirements of such intercultural transfer.

2.3. Process of Intercultural Transfer

Bassnett and Trivedi discuss the concept of translation and stress the idea that translation is an ongoing process that includes intercultural transfer:

Translation does not happen in a vacuum, but in a continuum; it is not an isolated act, it is part of an ongoing process of intercultural transfer. Moreover, translation is a highly manipulative activity that involves all kinds of stages in that process of transfer across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Translation is not an innocent, transparent activity but is highly charged with significance at every stage (1999, p. 2).

By the same token, Snell-Hornby notes that the study of translation goes along with the study of culture. , She refers to translation as an intercultural activity, an intralingual one that deals with at least two linguistic systems embedded in two different cultures. Intercultural communication is conceptualized as communication between people from different cultures. However, the difficulties inherent in the translation process vary proportionately with the degree of distance between the languages and the cultures involved. Snell-Hornby points out that culture may not be understood in the narrow sense of a translator's advanced intellectual development as reflected in the arts, but in the broader anthropological sense to refer to all socially conditioned aspects of human life (1988, p. 39).

Snell-Hornby adds:

The text is embedded in a given situation, which is itself conditioned by its sociocultural background. The translation is then dependent on its function as a text "implanted" in the target culture, whereby there is the alternative of either preserving

the original function of the source text in its culture [...] or of changing the function to adapt to specified needs in the target culture (1988, p. 44).

By the same token, Bandia argues that translation is an intercultural transfer and an intralingual one. Translation deals with two linguistic systems embedded in two different cultures. The difficulties inherent in the translation process vary proportionately with the degree of distance between the languages and the cultures involved. Bandia says:

Cultural value systems are difficult to grasp as they are intricately woven into the texture of the native language. A conscientious translator, therefore, must be willing to make the extra effort that is required to unearth the full cultural meaning hidden in the language. He must be alive to the two sociocultural systems with which he is working in order to narrow the gap that separates them. His task becomes even more complicated when he is working between two languages of divergent sociocultural backgrounds and the issue takes another twist when the translation is between the languages of the "colonizer" and the "colonized." The translator must then be particularly careful about how he handles the material of the source language in his desire to be faithful to the target language and culture. Although this is true of any translation, what sets it apart is the fact that the translator should strive to avoid exacerbating tensions created by past historical events (colonialism), by ensuring that no "negative stereotyping due to ignorance of the source culture occurs in the translation. An unbalanced approach might ultimately undermine the quality of the translated material. In a nutshell, while being aware of the sensibilities of the target language reader, the translator should also endeavor to preserve the socio-cultural content of the source language (1993, p. 57).

2.4. Signifier and Signified

The Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure is the founder of modern linguistics; Lesley Lanir says in her article *Ferdinand de Saussure: The Linguistic Unit – Sign, Signified and Signifier Explained*:

The part of the sign Saussure calls the ‘concept’ or ‘meaning’ (mental impression/association of the ‘thing’) he named, ‘signified.’ The idea of what ‘Google’ is, for example, is signified. The part he calls the ‘sound-image’ (the mental ‘linguistic sign’ given to the ‘thing’) he named the ‘signifier’ – this is the sound Google’s logo creates in our minds. As Saussure explains, the connection between all ‘signifiers’ which are ‘sound images’ or ‘linguistic signs’ and what they are signifying – their signified object or concept – is arbitrary. In other words, there is not necessarily any logical connection between the two. Again, the word ‘Google’ exemplifies this well. (Lanir, 2012, para. 8)

It is the translators’ task to transfer both the signifier and the signified from the ST to the TT, translate meanings and concepts signified, not just signifiers or mere words, in case they miss any of them, or do not effectively express them; the message of the original writer will not be appropriately conveyed and consequently may be misunderstood.

2.5 Intertextuality

This sub-section reviews intertextuality. Isha Mahajan says that the term intertextuality was developed by the poststructuralist Julia Kristeva in the 1960s, and since then it has been widely accepted by postmodern literary critics and theoreticians. The term was a response to Ferdinand de Saussure’s theory and his claim that signs gain their meaning through structure in a particular text. But she argues that because readers are always influenced by other texts, sifting through their archives, when reading a new one, then de Saussure’s view does not

capture this. Basically, when writers borrow from previous texts, their work acquires layers of meaning. In addition, when a text is read in the light of another text, all the assumptions and effects of the other text give extra meanings and influence the interpretation of the ST. It serves as a subtheme, and reminds us of the double narratives in allegories. The Bible is considered an instance of intertextuality, since the New Testament quotes passages from the Old Testament.²

2.6. Adapting the Content to Conform to the Receptor's Culture

Nida and Taber refer to the necessity to conform to the receptor's culture, a kind of cultural translation, which is:

A translation in which the content of the message is changed to conform to the receptor culture in some way, and/or in which information is introduced which is not linguistically implicit in the original (1969, p. 199).

For example, Mahfouz uses names that have strong connotations with Quranic figures when read in Arabic and in accordance with the Eastern culture. *جبلّوي*, for example, is literally understood as “man of the mountain” and is the strong and feared father in *Children of the Alley*. *جبلّوي* comes from the Arabic word *جبل* which has two meanings, the first is ‘mountain’ (noun) and the second is ‘to create’ (verb), Theroux transliterated *جبلّوي* into Gabalawi and this rendering has no connotations or even denotations in the Western culture. I think the Arabic *جبلّوي* gives us a sense of Mahfouz's intentions which the English transliteration “Gabalawi” does not convey. Similarly, Mahfouz uses *رفاعة*, a name that inspires discipline, sublimation, and refinement. Most Western scholars, Jews, and Christians believe Jesus died, but the Muslim readers believe that Jesus ascended to

² <http://www.academia.edu/4916746/Intertextuality>

Heaven and that he was never crucified, that is never put on the cross. The word رفاعة is a derivative of the verb رفع which means 'ascend' and the name of رفاعة in Arabic has a strong connotation with Jesus Christ that رفاعة symbolises when read in Arabic. Theroux transliterated رفاعة into Refaa, which again does not give the same connotation or intertextuality in English.

The Eastern culture does not allow any criticism of religions and dictates certain rules of conduct. Criticism of religious beliefs in the East could lead to social scorn, accusations of blasphemy, execution, or assassination attempts. In the East, it is believed that the Holy Book of Islam (Quran) is the guideline of Muslims' lives. The Western culture, on the other hand, shows strong support for freedom of expression - theoretically any kind of freedom is accepted in the West even if this freedom of expression touches upon religion or even lashes out prophets. The U.S. pastor Terry Jones, a self-professed scourge of Islam, threatened to burn copies of Quran. The US government refused requests from Eastern countries to punish Jones when he and some supporters held a mock trial of the Quran and set a copy on fire on 21 March 2011. So when Mahfouz - the son of the East - writes to mock prophets and religions (based on the way the East receives *Children of the Alley*), the West will not be bothered and will consider it freedom of expression and a sort of literary work, especially when the translation of the novel into English backs such understanding.

2.7. Translation of Arabic Literature in the West

Translation of Arabic literature in the West is confined to a small circle of Eastern writers and novelists. Pioneers of Arabic literature such as Abas Mahmoud Al-Akad, Taha Hussein, Yehia Hakki, Yusuf Idris, Yousef Sebai, Tawfik Al Hakem and many more are not frequently translated by important publishing houses in the West. The question here is how

Eastern texts and writers to be translated are selected by the West? Arabic literature is almost not present at all on the world stage. There are many reasons and dimensions for this issue: the Western culture refuses to contain the core of Arabic literature, and it opts for certain ideological concepts and stereotypes that suit the picture it wants to portray and convey to the West about the East. Faiq explains:

There is, it seems, a continuous interaction between Western representations of Arabic culture and the linguistic, cultural and political economy of translation from Arabic. Even the writings in French or English of Arabs tend to fit two criteria: the dominant ideology and poetics of translation from Arabic and the dominant stereotypical representations of Arab-Islamic culture. These two criteria have been framed by the numerous translations of the *One Thousand and One Nights* which, for almost two centuries, has undeniably been the main source of Western representations of Arab culture and by extension Islam, as a cultural ensemble, in both the extremely negative (violence, barbarism, etc.) and the positive, but inherently negative (exoticism and sensualism) (2004, p. 11-12).

Similarly, Amani Amin, editor, writer, and founder of arabworldbooks.com, says:

Arab writers are facing numerous difficulties. Locally, there are publishing and distribution issues. Even within the broader Arab world, censorship, bureaucracy and a lack of professional channels for distribution are major challenges. At the international level, the main challenge is translation. While translations sponsored by Arab publishers - mostly government-controlled - are not up to standard, translations outside the Arab world are usually selective, concentrate on folklore and generally cater to orientalists' expectations. It is only with collaboration between governments,

institutions and associations representing civil society that we can best address these problems (2008).

Faiq points out that the dissemination of Arabic literature through translation can play a vital role in exporting Arab culture to the West; it can be a move towards ending cultural encounters and clashes between civilizations. However, it is not an easy move; this process faces many obstacles, includes real challenges, and may turn violent. Faiq refers to theorists who believe that translation includes manipulation and violence, "Taking culture and ideology as their starting point, a number of theorists have argued that the act of translating involves manipulation, subversion, appropriation and violence" (2004, p. 2).

On a similar note, the purpose and activity of translation may beget violence as Venuti says:

The violence of translation resides in its very purpose and activity: the reconstruction of the foreign text in accordance with values, beliefs, and representations that pre-exist in the target language, always configured in hierarchies of dominance and marginality, always determining the production, circulation, and reception of texts. . . . Whatever difference the translation conveys is now imprinted by the target-language culture, assimilated to its positions of intelligibility, its canons and taboos, its codes and ideologies. The aim of translation is to bring back a cultural other as the same, the recognizable, even the familiar; and this aim always risks a wholesale domestication of the foreign text, often in highly self-conscious projects, where translation serves an imperialist appropriation of foreign cultures for domestic agendas, cultural, economic, political (1996, p. 196).

On a similar note, Ibrahim Farghali, Egyptian writer who grew up in the United Arab Emirates, wrote an article dated 29 September 2012 in *The National* daily titled *Are the real*

secrets of Arabic literature lost in translation? Where he discusses translating Arabic literature and argues:

It is quite clear that there is a focus on the topics and not the techniques of writing on the part of publishers today, usually concentrating around subjects such as corruption, the role of Arab women in their societies and sexual relations (particularly in closed societies). This appears to be driven by a publishing market which offers the Western reader an image that says that, while such countries may not possess any “global” writers, they nevertheless possess societies that the reader can enjoy getting to know. They are closed, incomprehensible societies, producers of terrorism and violence, whose inhabitants live through numberless manifestations of corruption and persecution, whose women suffer sexual and social victimization... and these books will try to open the door to this world for you (2012).

The ideology of the West tends to marginalize and ignore the distinctive and unique characteristics of Eastern literature as Faiq says:

Though the West has, in the 1980s and 1990s, opened up to Third World peoples, cultures and texts – Latinos, for example – the literatures of the Arab-Islamic world remain generally marginalized, despite the enormous and persistent attention – almost hysteria – accorded to Arabs and to Islam. Translation from Arabic still proceeds along familiar and established scripts (2004, p. 5).

The assumed and imaginary basis in most representations of all that is Arab and Islamic lies in the Western obsession with fixed texts and its fixation with the mechanisms of this fixedness, which all non-Western cultures are said to lack. Translating Arabic texts, with specific traditions for production, reception and circulation, into fixed texts has meant taking liberties, being invisible, violent, appropriationist and subverter to shift the texts into

mainstream world culture and literature. World culture and literature means, of course, the Western canons of production that also stand as signs of universalism and humanism (cf. Asad, 1995, cited in Faiq, 2004, p. 5).

Faiq provides further insights into the reasons for the attitude adopted by the West towards the Arab World:

It can perhaps be argued that such attitudes of the West towards the Arab world, through translation and representation, can be rationalized on the basis that two different cultures with two separate pasts have clashed, and continue to do so. The Europeans colonized the Arab lands for decades, and the post-colonial situation is different only in terms of the fact that, after the Second World War, the United States became in many ways the guardian, or custodian, of the Arab world. Given such a premise, one can argue that manipulatory and subversive representations of one side to the other may be taken as part of the scheme of history. After all, without such clashes, manipulations and subversions history would not have moved. The problem, however, is that representations of the Arab world, and Islam, have changed very little. The same discursive strategies still prevail. The representations of Arabs and Islam by and/or for the West are not just accounts of different places, cultures and societies, but more importantly, they are projections of the West's own fears and desires masqueraded as objective knowledge: consider for instance how the words jihad and fatwa have been injected with meanings that reinforce the centuries-old clichés (2004, p. 8, 9).

2.8. Reception Theory

Reception theory is the way a reader receives a literary text, e.g. a novel. It is a means of understanding this piece of literature by looking into the way readers (recipients) comprehend and interpret it; hence the reaction of the recipient is the main point of reception.

In her article “What Is a Reception Theory?”, Barnhart says:

Traditional literary theory, which dominated prior to 1960, did not place as much emphasis on the reader’s function in the creative process. The emphasis in traditional literary theory was on the author as well as the form and construction of the literary piece. Literary form takes into account whether the piece is a novel, short story, poem or play. In addition, the author’s style and choice of literary devices, such as character development, setting, imagery and point of view, are also considerations in literary form. Traditional literary criticism asked questions about what the author was trying to communicate, how the work fit into a particular genre, why the author chose a particular literary device, and how the author’s background and experience influenced the creative process (2003, para. 2).

In the same vein, Barnhart (2003) defines reception theory as a philosophy about the arts that recognize the audience as an essential element in the creative process. She added that reception theory was originally developed as a method of literary criticism, and that meaning does not lie in the work of art itself; rather it is part of a process of interaction between the audience (receivers) and the artwork. Barnhart also refers to the cultural background of the receivers, their education, their native language, and whether the text is a

translation or written in the readers' native language, all these elements play a role in understanding and in the reception of a work of literature.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented relevant theoretical points that are important in examining the two different receptions of *Children of the Alley* in its source and target cultures respectively. The next chapter introduces the Eastern reception of *Children of the Alley*.

Chapter 3: EASTERN RECEPTION

The focus of this chapter is on the Eastern reception of أولاد حارتنا (*Children of the Alley*). It introduces Mahfouz and the Arabic version of the novel, then provides its interpretation by Eastern recipients who are fully aware of the text, its language and culture. The chapter ends with a discussion of the religious interpretation of أولاد حارتنا and why the Eastern recipients have tended to refuse its contents.

Based on the review of literature in the previous chapters, the methodology used in the examination of the reception of *Children of the Alley* in this and the next chapter is as follows:

- 1) Eastern reception: Here most pertinent reviews and studies about how and why *Children of the Alley* has been received in the Arab World in a particular way are examined. This examination considers issues related to identity, religion, belief system as portrayed in the Arabic ST.
- 2) Western reception: Here most pertinent reviews and studies about how and why *Children of the Alley* has been received in the West in a certain way are examined. This examination considers issues related to identity, religion, belief system as represented through the English translation of the Arabic ST.

3.1. Naguib Mahfouz

Naguib Mahfouz (1911- 2006) is the most famous and widely read novelist not only in Egypt, but also in the Arabic speaking countries in the twentieth century. His family was a lower middle-class Muslim family living in the Gamaleyya quarter of Cairo; this Gamaleyya area provided the backdrop for his *Children of the Alley*. Egypt and its alleys are also at the

center of many novels written by Mahfouz, who published tens of novels and short stories and wrote dozens of movie scripts. He is the only Nobel laureate for literature in the Arab World. Some of his novels have been translated into many languages all over the world, particularly after the award of the Nobel Prize.

3.2. Mahfouz's Most Controversial Novel

Children of the Alley was Mahfouz's first novel after seven years of silence following the 1952 revolution. It quickly became one of his most famous novels. It was first serialized by *Al-Ahram* (Egyptian Arabic daily) in 1959, but was then banned when Al-Azhar petitioned President Nasser to intervene and impose a ban on it, and Nasser did. *Children of the Alley* had been banned all over the Middle East for accusations of blasphemy over its allegorical portrayal of God and the monotheistic Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Lebanon was the only country in the Middle East that agreed to publish it. *Children of the Alley* is considered one of the most controversial Arabic novels of the twentieth century. Many Eastern readers, even scholars and preachers flew into a fit of rage when they came across it (the novel first appeared under the title of *Children of Gabalawi*). About its publication, Gordon writes:

Children of Gabalawi was finally published in 1967 in Lebanon. When a few thousand copies of the book were brought to Egypt they sold briskly for two weeks until the imams of Al-Azhar heard what was happening. The government quite rapidly acceded to the Al-Azhar's sheikh's outcry and the book was banned (1990, p. 88).

3.3. The Eastern Reception of *Children of the Alley*

3.3.1. The Islamic Identity of the Egyptian Society

Mahfouz tried to present a new sphere of change within the context of the Egyptian society and its strong Islamic identity. He clearly seems to prefer secularist socialism to revivalist Islamism, as is shown by his portrayal of sacred figures - he makes them look like ordinary people, wrongdoers who take drugs, smoke shisha (nargile, hookah), and are sometimes lustful. Mahfouz says about Qasim in chapter 66, p. 318:

وأنت شاب مولع بالنساء ترصد عند المغيب فتيات الخلاء

You are a boy crazy about women, you lurk in the dark for the desert women (p. 261).

Mahfouz is secular and wanted to secularize the Egyptian mentality at large. This was in line with the dominant atmosphere of the 1950s that tried to separate the Egyptian society from religion, or at least not being allied in full with or against any religion in particular. However, the identity of the Egyptian society can never be secularized; Egypt tends to adhere to a balance between secularism and religion. For example, the Eastern Muslim reader finds it so difficult to accept what Mahfouz says through the character of Arafa, about prophets in *Children of the Alley* when he cursed them and their followers, referring to them as (أولاد كلب) “bastards and cowards” in chapter 94, page 457:

فقال حنش ضاحكاً:

- حسبك أنك الوحيد في هذه الحارة الذي يتعامل معه الجميع من جبلية ورفاعة وقاسمية

- عليهم اللعنة جميعاً، وصمت ملأ وعيناه تلمعان في ضوء البدروم الخافت ثم قال:

- كل واحد منهم يفاخر برجله بغباء وعمى، يفاخرون برجال لم يبقى منهم إلا أسماءهم، ولا يحاولون قط أن يجاوزوا
الفخر الكاذب بخطوة واحدة ! أولاد كلب جبناء.

Hanash laughed, “It’s enough that you’re the only person in the alley that everyone does
business with – from Gabal, Rifaa and Qassem.”

“God damn them all ... Each of them [Al Gabal, Al Rifaa, Al Qassem] is so stupidly, so
blindly proud of its man—all proud of men of whom nothing is left but their names. And
they never make any attempt to go one step beyond that false pride! Bastards, Cowards (p.
370).

Some analysts may say that readers should look at this novel as a piece of art and a
literary work, or in any other way as an excuse as this thesis discusses in the next chapter.
However, when Mahfouz describes the prophets and their followers – directly or indirectly –
as “bastards, cowards” and “عليهم اللعنة جميعا” “God damn them all,” I think it becomes
really difficult for the Eastern recipient and the Muslim mentality to accept any excuse in
defence of the novel.

Despite factors or conditions such as globalization, invasion of Western culture, or
even occupation that may have influenced the Eastern personality and
the dogmatic principles of Islam contained in العقيدة the “’aqiida”, Muslim countries tend to
pass through a transitional stage of working towards a political, economic and social identity
that would conform to Islamic dogma as part and parcel of the East. It is very essential as
Hodgson argues that in the Middle East region, “the most significant elements in the region
are religion and religious conscience” (1977, p. 166).

The Islamic identity of Egypt may have been influenced by many external elements in the late 1950s when *Children of the Alley* was written, including, for example, WWI and WWII, the revolutions of 1919 and 1952, and the assassination attempt on Gamal Abdel-Nasser in October 1954. Nasser reacted by arresting and imprisoning members of the Muslim Brotherhood. Nasser tried to put Egypt on a secular path as Esposito asserts:

We can see this process quite clearly in the formulations of Arab Nationalism and Arab socialism preached by Gamel Abdel Nasser within Egypt and throughout the Arab world. From the nineteenth century, Egypt had pursued a path of increasing secularization beginning with the rule of Muhammed Ali (1805–49) and continuing through the free officers' revolution of July 1952. In the first years after the revolution, Egyptian nationalism continued on a secular path (2000, p. 4).

However, the Islamic identity of the Egyptian people is firmly established, entrenched and can never be altered under any circumstances. It is deeply rooted in the history of Egypt: Egyptians do love religion, consider it part and parcel of their identity. It retains a place in their hearts that cannot be altered; it is simply their way of life.

Mahfouz utilizes the Socratic Method to raise doubts about religion, faith and God's will. The Socratic Method is a technique which utilizes a series of questions to expose contradictions, inadequacies and inconsistencies in the beliefs of someone. Mahfouz does this throughout *Children of the Alley*, rubbing Egypt's religious establishment the wrong way when, for example, the people of the alley believe that Gabalawi made promises that all should share the wealth, money and prosperity of the estate, so they sense that life is going to get better, but unfortunately over time bad people, extortionists, and gangsters seize the estate's fortunes for themselves only.

3.3.2. Mahfouz's Novel Includes Absurdities of Various Kinds

Sadiq al-Mahdi, the well-known Sudanese political and religious figure, accused Mahfouz of blasphemy when he wrote in *Alsharq AlAwsat*, a Saudi-owned independent pan-Arab newspaper, on 10 September 2006, "I read *Awlad Haretna* and had no patience to continue reading, but for the name of its writer, I found a bad plot full of absurdities of various kinds."

3.3.3. Mahfouz Promotes Atheism

Abdel-Monem El-Shahat, the official spokesperson for the Salafist movement, reiterated his belief, in a TV interview with Al Jazeera Mubasher Misr channel dated 2 December 2011, that Mahfouz promoted promiscuity and atheism in his works: "The novels Mahfouz wrote incite promiscuity, prostitution and atheism; it is a shame if Egypt is viewed through the literature of Mahfouz." He elaborated that Mahfouz's novels "are mostly set in areas involving brothels and drugs." He went on to describe Mahfouz's *Children of the Alley* as a novel that includes "symbols promoting atheism."

3.3.4. Mahfouz is an Apostate

Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman, currently serving a life sentence in the USA for alleged involvement in the first World Trade Center attack, condemned the ridicule of the Quran in *Children of the Alley* and issued a Fatwa declaring Naguib Mahfouz an apostate:

Naguib Mahfouz writes a novel that refers to the prophetic history of the Quran. Had someone punished Mahfouz for his famous novel, Salman Rushdie would not have dared to publish *Satanic Verses*.³

³ Translation of the Arabic article retrieved from <http://www.startimes.com/f.aspx?t=16841432>

3.3.5. Al-Azhar Committee Bans *Children of the Alley*

A Committee from Al-Azhar chaired by Muhammad al-Ghazali, a prominent Islamist thinker of the second half of the twentieth century and Al-Azhar's Grand Sheikh in 1959 when the novel was written banned *Children of the Alley*. Al-Ghazali is considered one of the moderate voices of the New Islamists; he had been lecturing, advising and fighting terrorism and extremism. He declared that arts, fiction, science, poetry, etc are accepted within the framework of Islam. However, al-Ghazali and Al-Azhar Committee strongly condemned *Children of the Alley* and refused its publication in Egypt.

3.3.6. Mahfouz Personifies God

Many Eastern scholars agree that Mahfouz's *Children of the Alley* includes clear personification of God (Abdel-Fatah Barakah, former Secretary General of Al-Azhar's Islamic Research Academy, declared that Mahfouz described Allah, prophets and sacred figures in an inappropriate manner, waded into the history of an alley whose denizens are all the descendants of one man, Gabalawi, who keeps himself hidden away in the mansion at the top of the alley with clear personification of God).⁴

Similarly, Mustafa Al-Shakaa, member of Al-Azhar's Islamic Research Academy and former dean of Ain-Shams Faculty of Arts, wrote on 08 October 1983 in *Elghad* daily:

Al-Azhar will never agree to the publication of *Children of the Alley*. This novel personifies science and technology as the modern prophets of humanity, Mahfouz uses symbolism to portray Allah and the prophets and clearly attacks all religions, especially Islam.⁵

⁴ Translation of the Arabic article retrieved from <http://www.elmokhalestv.com/index/details/id/13545>

⁵ Translation of the Arabic article in *Elghad* daily retrieved from: http://www.elghad.com/Read.asp?News_Id

3.3.7. Crossed the Red Lines.

In an interview with Hassan Omar, the former head of Education and Scientific Research Committee in the Shurah Council in 2012, the head of the Nour Party in the Buhairah Governorate in Egypt, and a member of the 100-strong Assembly that drafted Egypt's 2012 constitution, he stated that religion shapes the world we live in, whenever we utter or write one single word, we have to think of its impact on our religion, it is, for sure, a reflection of us, when someone writes one word, he has to be aware about its consequences and how it will reflect on his viewers or readers. Sheikh Hassan condemned *Children of the Alley* as blasphemous, adding that Mahfouz crossed the red lines, transposed Allah to the figure of Gabalawi, depicted as a rich proprietor living in the Big Mansion. *Children of the Alley* is divided into five sections: Adham (Adam), Gabal (Moses), Rifa'a (Jesus), Qasim (Muhammed), and the magician Arafa who symbolizes science. Mahfouz allegorizes God's death at the hands of the new prophet, Arafa, the magician who personifies science.

Omar pointed out that Mahfouz clearly depicted Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings Be Upon him) as a womanizer, and an alcohol-drinking, hashish-smoking ruffian. Mahfouz shows no respect for religion, depicting sacred prophets can never be accepted in Islam. Omar ends the interview by highlighting that Mahfouz characterized people as being trapped by questions of what is the relationship of Islam to modernity, and that the actions of the characters in *Children of the Alley* question faith, science, tradition, moral actions, and put science in a direct conflict with religion.

3.3.8. Science Supplanted Religion

Mahfouz's themes in *Children of the Alley* are oppositional to religion. Rasheed El-Enany, who researches all genres of modern Arabic literature with particular interest in the fiction of Naguib Mahfouz, says about *Children of the Alley*:

It is a unique allegory to human history from Genesis to the present day. In it the masters of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are stripped of their holiness and represented, in thin disguise, as no more than social reformers who strove to the best of their ability to liberate their people from tyranny and exploitation. Another character in the allegory stands for science, which is shown to have supplanted religion and at whose hands the demise of God is eventually affected (1993, p. 13).

3.4. Religious Interpretation of *Children of the Alley*

Besides reading it a piece of literature, *Children of the Alley* forces itself to be read as a as a religious and allegorical tale that strongly imposes itself on the reader of the Arabic version. El-Enany points out that *Children of the Alley* is a panoramic view of the history of man and religion from the beginning of time to the present day. God, Satan, Adam, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad are all there, but without the halo of religious myth: *Children of the Alley* is an attempt at demythologizing humanity's religious quest (1993, p. 142).

For the religious Muslims in Egypt and elsewhere, Mahfouz wrote an anti-Quranic analogy, the names, sayings, actions, deeds, and lives of the main characters that dwell the alley represent huge signs of the re-enactment of the holy figures and holy stories narrated in the Quran. *Children of the Alley* is divided into five main episodes, four of them represent the stories of Adham, Gebel, Rifa'a, and Qassim, and the last episode represents Arafa who refers to science and inventions that remarkably affect modern life. In general terms, the

following approximations of the names used by Mahfouz and real religious figures are in order:

- Adham refers to Adam
- Umaima is Adham's wife and mother of Qadri and Humam, she refers to Eve, the literal meaning of Umaima is 'small mother.'
- Qasim refers to the Prophet Muhammad, One of prophet Muhammad's nickname is Abul-Qasim
- Qadri and Humam refers to Cain and Abel.
- Arafa, who represents science, is derived from the Arabic عرف, "to know".

Children of the Alley tells the story of Gabalawi, who owns the alley and all the land around it. He builds a mansion, brings up his children, has many sons, he favors Adham over the rest --- this parallels the Quranic story of Adam and his descent with his wife (Eve) to Earth.

قال تعالى في سورة البقرة ، اية 35:

وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٣٥﴾

Translated by Al-Hilali & Khan as:

“And We said: "O Adam! Dwell you and your wife in the Paradise and eat both of you freely with pleasure and delight of things therein as wherever you will, but come not near this tree or you both will be of the Zalimun (wrong-doers)." (Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 35).

Adham is chosen to oversee the property, rather than Idris, the eldest son. All Gabalawi's sons agree on his choice except Idris who flies into rage. Idris refuses the

decision because he believes it is his right to oversee the estate and not Adham. So Gabalawi expels Idris from the mansion. Adham manages the property, goes to work, collects rents from tenants, and does accounts which he then submits to his father. Adham falls in love with a slave woman named Umaima, and then marries her. He also feels sorry for his brother Idris. One day Idris visits Adham, tries to persuade him to peek at the silver box in Gabalawi's room, as this silver box holds a very important book that contains the secrets of Gabalawi, the state of alley-dwellers, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, the happiness of believers, and knowledge of the future. Adham refuses Idris' request but is tempted by his wife, Umaima, to break into Gabalawi's inner sanctum so that he can read Gabalawi's will and learn the future. Gabalawi catches Adham, punishes him and expels him from the mansion. Adham builds a shack outside the mansion and dreams of going back inside. He leads a long life of despair and struggle, has twin boys who grow up in the alley: Qaidra and his murderous brother Humam, allegory to the story of Cain and Abel. Out of the blue, Adham finds Gabalawi in front of him, takes pity on his disconsolate son. This includes a reference to the following Quranic text:

قال تعالى في سورة البقرة ، اية 37:

فَلَقَّىٰ آدَمُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ كَلِمَاتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٣٧﴾

Translated by Al-Hilali & Khan as

“Then Adam received from his Lord Words. And his Lord pardoned him (accepted his repentance). Verily, He is the One Who forgives (accepts repentance), the Most Merciful.”
(Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 37).

As a token of forgiveness, Gabalawi tells Adham that he has forgiven him and that سيكون الوقف لذريتك, the property will belong to his children, بني آدم forever, reference to the famous phrase بني آدم (children of Adam - mankind).

قال تعالى في سورة البقرة ، آية 38:

قُلْنَا أَهْبَطُوا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى فَمَنْ تَبِعَ هُدَايَ
فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾

Translated by Al-Hilali & Khan as:

“We said: "Get down all of you from this place (the Paradise), then whenever there comes to you Guidance from Me, and whoever follows My Guidance, there shall be no fear on them, nor shall they grieve.” (Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 38).

After that, social injustice starts again in the Hara (district, neighbourhood), which has reference to Earth. This is in line with what El-Enany explains:

Thus social injustice began but injustice engenders resistance, and this is exactly what Judaism, Christianity and Islam were all about according to Mahfouz. They are seen within the simplistic terms of the allegory as a succession of socio-political movements against a repressive system, aiming at establishing a just order on earth. However, the successes of those prophets were only of temporary duration, for each time the hara lapsed again into its old evil ways (1993, p. 142).

Mahfouz allegorically accuses religions of paying no attention to science and technology when Arafa is made to feel unwelcome in the Hara, enduring sarcasm, mockery, and insults, in chapter 93, p. 450:

يا الف مصيبة عليك، من أنت حتى تسكن في حارتنا؟

A thousand misfortunes on you! Who are you to live in our alley? (p. 365)

Arafa finally finds quarters in a cellar with a single barred window, it symbolizes that science becomes strangled from human feelings. It is clearly stated in the novel that the duty and mission of Arafa is to get rid of Gabalawi or the idea of God, which is a reference to the conception that science can control religion, Arafa himself says in chapter 103, p. 503:

إن كلمة من جدنا كانت تدفع الطيبين من احفاده إلى العمل حتى الموت ، موته اقوى من كلماته ، إنه يوجب على الابن الطيب أن يفعل كل شيء ، أن يحل محله ، أن يكونه، أفهمت!؟

His death should be stronger than his words. It makes it the duty of a good son to do everything, to take his place, to be *him*, do you understand? (p. 408).

On this point, El-Enany (1993) observes that the demise of the idea of God in the modern world is paralleled by the death of Gabalawi (significantly instigated by the magician's clandestine raid on his forbidden mansion). El-Enany thinks that Mahfouz goes even further in his endeavour to establish science as the legitimate heir of religion, this can be seen in the vision Arafa has of a message the dying Gabalawi passed to him through the maid, and the text of the message is given in chapter 111, p. 538:

اذهبي إلى عرفة الساحر وأبلغيه عني أن جده مات وهو راض عنه

Go to Arafa the magician and tell him for me that his ancestor died pleased with him
(p. 437).

El-Enany highlighted that Arafa is established as a recipient of revelation like his prophetic predecessors. Mahfouz bestows on science the spiritual power inherent in religion (1993, p. 143).

Summary

This chapter has represented the Eastern reception of *Children of the Alley* by explaining the reasons why the Eastern reader cannot accept it. The chapter also provides the religious interpretation of the novel from the Eastern reader's viewpoint. The next chapter will outline the Western reception of the novel, its political reading and the reasons the West accepts it.

Chapter 4: WESTERN RECEPTION

This chapter explores the Western reception. It introduces Peter Theroux, the translator of *Children of the Alley*, provides insights on the TT, and ends by examining the possible political interpretations of why the Western recipients tend to accept the text the way they do.

4.1. Peter Theroux

From an article titled “Peter Theroux”:

Peter Christopher Sebastian Theroux (born 1956) is an American writer and translator. He studied English literature at Harvard University, and spent a year at the American University in Cairo. He worked as a journalist in Saudi Arabia, and for a time was a stringer for the Wall Street Journal. Theroux was born in Boston, Massachusetts, the son of Catholic parents; his mother, Anne (née Dittami), was Italian American, and his father, Albert Eugene Theroux, was French-Canadian (2012, para. 1).

Theroux is a creative translator, a second author of the novel, a thinker who comprehended, analyzed, and absorbed the ST to provide a relevant TT to the Western reader. Theroux proved himself capable of doing so by mastering the relevant cultural knowledge and social awareness of both languages; his translation can be read as if it was originally written in English.

Raymond Stock says about Theroux:

There's none better, his translations are clear and poetic and read like they're written in English. You never sense you're reading a translation; his translations are at the same literary level—or beyond—as the original work (Peterson, 2008).

Britt Peterson in his article "Found in Translation" quotes Theroux, who sums up his understanding of the gap between the East and West:

I would like for Arab authors to be able to speak with their own voices from within the region. And for us to see the overwhelming percentage of the people who are not terrorists and who fear or hate them as much as we do. It's an unhappy thought that this part of the world that gave us so much of our culture and the religions that people practice looks so scary. But at a ground level, it's not so scary (Peterson, 2008).

4.2. The English translation of *Children of the Alley*

Theroux produces the TT through a process of translation that makes it very close to the Western reader, easily digested and appreciated. His TT falls within literary translation, which "is a very social, culturally-bound process where the translator plays a key role in a complex series of interactions" (cited in Baker, 1998, p. 127).

Similarly, Lambert refers to translation of literary works, "translation is the fruit of a substantial creative effort by the translator, who is the key agent in the subjective activity and social practice of translation. Whatever the restraints of the network of social and cultural factors, it is ultimately the literary translator who makes thousands of decisions that give a literary work its 'afterlife': an existence in other languages" (1998, p. 130).

In connection with what this thesis discussed previously in chapter three, Venuti says about the foreign text and translation:

Both foreign text and translation are derivatives: both consist of diverse linguistic and cultural materials that neither the foreign writer nor the translator originates, and that destabilize the work of signification, inevitably exceeding and possibly conflicting with their intentions. As a result, a foreign text is the site of many different semantic possibilities that are fixed only provisionally in any one translation, on the basis of varying cultural assumptions and interpretive choices, in specific social situations, in different historical periods (Venuti, 1995, p. 18).

As discussed in section 4 of chapter two about the signifier and signified, translation is a medium through which translators approach to redo or rather reconstruct symbols and signifiers that constitute the source text and create new signifiers and symbols, which are easily comprehended and recognized by the target language reader. The new rendering conveys the meaning, which originally exists in the ST, yet translators extend it to suit the target reader and fit the target culture. This is the case with Theroux and his rendering of *Children of the Alley* into English.

As discussed in chapter two, culture has influenced the production of Theroux's translation. He considers the requirements of the target reader as well as the target language, including Western signals and avoids Eastern ones.

Culture becomes one of the major issues in *Children of the Alley*. It affects the production of translation, the new rendering is Western-oriented whereby Theroux cleverly considers the culture of the target language, sets his target to determine which cultural elements to include and exclude. The reader cannot see the text as translation because Theroux is invisible - this is in line with Venuti's use of the term invisibility to describe the translator's situation and activity: *Invisibility* is the term I will use to describe the translator's situation and activity in contemporary Anglo-

American culture. It refers to two mutually determining phenomena: one is an illusionistic effect of discourse, of the translator's own manipulation of English; the other is the practice of reading and evaluating translations that has long prevailed in the United Kingdom and the United States, among other cultures, both English and foreign language (1995, p. 1).

The translation of *Children of the Alley* reads like a novel written originally in English and is not simply a rendering of the Arabic ST. Readers can read it fluently and smoothly in English without hindrances that may block their reception, or make it look like a translation from a different culture. On this point, Venuti argues:

A translated text, whether prose or poetry, fiction or nonfiction, is judged acceptable by most publishers, reviewers, and readers when it reads fluently, when the absence of any linguistic or stylistic peculiarities makes it seem transparent, giving the appearance that it reflects the foreign writer's personality or intention or the essential meaning of the foreign text—the appearance, in other words, that the translation is not in fact a translation, but the “original.” The illusion of transparency is an effect of fluent discourse, of the translator's effort to insure easy readability by adhering to current usage, maintaining continuous syntax, fixing a precise meaning (1995, p.1-2).

For example, In *Children of the Alley*, Idris, whose Biblical referent is Lucifer, and the Quranic referent is Iblis, says in chapter 1, p. 5:

إني وأشقائي أبناء هانم من خيرة النساء ، أما هذا فابن جارية سوداء

Theroux translated the above into

My full brothers and I are the sons of a respectable lady- he's the son of a black slave woman! (p. 13)

This is a direct reference to verse 76 from Surah Sad:

قَالَ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْهُ خَلَقْتَنِي مِن نَّارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِن طِينٍ ﴿٧٦﴾

Translated by Al-Hilali & Khan as:

[Iblis (Satan)] said: "I am better than he, You created me from fire, and You created him from clay" (Surah Sad, verse 76).

The Western readers will not be able to relate the TT to the above Quranic verse, and consequently the impact and effect on them will not be as strong as on the Eastern readers. Because Theroux understands both the surface and deeper meanings of the ST, he is able to conform to the habitual use of the target language so that the Westerner finds no difficulty in absorbing the TT created by Theroux whose translation is an instance of cultural transplantation that adopts Western aesthetics, tastes, values, traditions, principles, code of conduct, etc. His usage of the domestication approach is incisive.

Hatim defines domestication as, "an approach to translation which, in order to combat some of the "alienating" effects of the foreign text, tends to promote a transparent, fluent style" (2001, p. 46). Domestication is the translation strategy through which Theroux closes the gap between the ST and the reader of the TT, adopts a smooth, transparent, fluent style of translation that can minimize the strangeness of the foreign text for target language readers. Here, domestication "designates the type of translation in which a transparent, fluent style is

adopted to minimize the strangeness of the foreign text for target language readers” (Shuttleworth & Cowie 1997, p. 59).

Venuti (1995) further explains that domestication dominates Anglo-American translation culture. It involves an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values. This strategy of translation promotes transparency, fluency and invisibility when translating in order to reduce the foreignness of the source text. Venuti writes;

The translator’s invisibility at once enacts and masks an insidious domestication of foreign texts, rewriting them in the transparent discourse that prevails in English and that selects precisely those foreign texts amenable to fluent translating. Insofar as the effect of transparency effaces the work of translation, it contributes to the cultural marginality and economic exploitation that English-language translators have long suffered, their status as seldom recognized, poorly paid writers whose work nonetheless remains indispensable because of the global domination of Anglo-American culture, of English. Behind the translator’s invisibility is a trade imbalance that underwrites this domination, but also decreases the cultural capital of foreign values in English by limiting the number of foreign texts translated and submitting them to domesticating revision (1995, p. 17).

Those who promote this strategy are selective about the texts to translate, always choosing texts that are likely to lend themselves to such a strategy, thus, following domestic literary standards.

4.3. The Western Reception of *Children of the Alley*

4.3.1. Secular Identity of the West

As discussed in chapter three, Mahfouz is secular author and his ideas emanate from his belief in secularism that contradicts the Eastern mentality and generally complies with the Western attitudes and basic values. The secular identity of the West caused many problems for Muslim minorities living there, including the problem of hijab in France, the minaret problem and burqa controversy in Switzerland, and the caricatures of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings Be Upon him) published in Denmark. The West considers the publication of the caricatures, for instance, as freedom of expression in contrast to the so called *ignorant* East which lacks democracy and transgresses freedom of expression. So when Mahfouz writes a novel and depicts sacred figures and prophets, the secular identity is able to understand, sometimes contain, and even appreciate it.

4.3.2. Mahfouz's Novel Well Received by the Western Reader

Mahfouz depicts Eastern cultural aspects in a way that makes them appear to stem from Western perspectives. He wrote this novel with a Western eye, e.g. consuming alcohol, sexual promiscuity, taking drugs are forbidden in Islam, and consequently the Eastern culture thoroughly rejects such deeds which deviate from the Eastern basic principles. But such literary techniques or modes of expression are common in the West, and consequently attract the Western reader. Mahfouz uses novelistic techniques, styles and trends in *Children of the Alley* that are associated with the Western literary tradition.

This observation is in line with Altoma's when he explains:

Mahfouz, undoubtedly, can be credited with his primary role in developing the novel in Arabic as a new genre within a relatively short period, Mahfouz has managed to emulate many of the Western fictional techniques, styles and trends and to create, in the process, a distinctly Arabic narrative art. By the mid-1950s, he had attained the status of a literary landmark (2005, p. 21).

In the same context, Selden says:

Mahfouz is keenly aware of the misconception that people in the West have of Egypt in particular and of the greater Arab community in general. He is familiar with the biased view of Arabs as 'others' who are inferior and he experienced the direct effects of British colonization in Egypt (1993, p. 190).

4.3.3. Sensitivity and Courage of Mahfouz's Works

Mahfouz's works are remarkable for the breadth of their subject matter and for the sensitivity and courage with which he treated the major issues of his time. Though specifically Egyptian in context, his works have a truly inter-cultural appeal and relevance; they are therefore fully worthy of an international readership (Le Gassick, 1991, p. 7). Anders Hallengren, an associate professor of comparative literature and a research fellow in the Department of History of Literature at Stockholm University, says about Mahfouz:

To see his works as mainly political fables or allegories is fallacious. It is a most misleading simplification, since there are many levels of interpretation and reception. His novels and short stories are works of art. They picture Egyptian milieus from the most ancient of times to contemporary everyday life, deal with questions of broad human concern, raise philosophical and existential questions. The author is always

guided by a belief in Egyptian continuity and greatness, from time to time shaken to its foundations by tumultuous history, the corruption of thought and disaster. In his novels there is a staunch belief in moral right and a constant seeking for Egyptian identity behind the weft of illusion and reality. Adweller in truth, unable to define it, Mahfouz is perpetually pursuing his own self (2004, p. 80).

4.3.4. Mahfouz is the Greatest Arab Novelist

Cowan incisively declares that Mahfouz is the greatest Arab novelist, he can be understood and easily digested by the Western reader and can even be compared to great Western writers, “in the grand style of Zola and Balzac, but who owes nothing to these two, being completely Egyptian and a twentieth-century successor to those who gave us *The Thousand and One Nights*” (cited in Altoma, 2005, p. 21).

4.3.5. Nobel Committee Refers to *Children of the Alley*

The Swedish Academy commended Mahfouz in the press release dated 13 October 1988 and laid strong emphasis on *Children of the Alley*:

Through the Swedish Academy's decision this year the Nobel Prize in Literature has for the first time been awarded to an Egyptian. Naguib Mahfouz was born and lives in Cairo. He is also the first literary Nobel Prize winner with Arabic as his native tongue. To date Mahfouz has been writing for about fifty years. At the age of 77 he is still indefatigable. Mahfouz's great and decisive achievement is as the writer of novels and short stories. His production has meant a powerful upswing for the novel as a genre and for the development of the literary language in Arabic-speaking cultural circles. The range is however greater than that. His work speaks to us all (1988, para. 1-3).

Then the Swedish Academy praised *Children of the Alley* and referred to its theme as man's everlasting search for spiritual values. So for them, it is a novel that promotes values.

4.3.6. Mahfouz is the Son of Islamic Civilization

In his speech delivered before the Swedish Academy and its Nobel committee in 1988 when he was awarded the Nobel Prize, Mahfouz affiliated himself to Islamic civilization and said that he is the son of two civilizations that at a certain age in history had formed a happy marriage, and that the first of these, seven thousand years old, is the Pharaonic civilization; the second, one thousand four hundred years old, is the Islamic one. Mahfouz further paid tributes to Islamic civilization when he said:

As for Islamic civilization I will not talk about its call for the establishment of a union between all Mankind under the guardianship of the Creator, based on freedom, equality and forgiveness. Nor will I talk about the greatness of its prophet. For among your thinkers there are those who regard him the greatest man in history. I will not talk of its conquests which have planted thousands of minarets calling for worship, devoutness and good throughout great expanses of land from the environs of India and China to the boundaries of France. Nor will I talk of the fraternity between religions and races that has been achieved in its embrace in a spirit of tolerance unknown to Mankind neither before nor since (Mahfouz, 1988, para. 6).

Furthermore, Mahfouz was able to absorb and include both the Eastern and Western cultures. This observation is in line with what Beard and Hayder say:

When Mahfouz speaks of himself in his Nobel acceptance speech as a child of two cultures, he underestimates; he is child of many more. Mahfouz's reading in Western fiction did not invite a haphazard career in which the influences of certain writers were reflected in his works. On the contrary, his reading filtered through him to carry

him over the historical stages of the novel, from romanticism to realism and then to the modern apprehension of experience (1993, p. 14).

In the same vein, Gordon defends Mahfouz and *Children of the Alley*:

The traditionalists claimed that Mahfouz had written an anti-Qur'ānic analogy as indicated by the fact that the number of chapters found in *Children of Gebelaawi* equalled the number of suras of the Quran, (114). Mahfouz disputed all four charges raised against him, claiming that the stories of the analogs of Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad suggest their religious teachings are different responses to two basic human quests: the search for just and meaningful existence (1990, p. 89).

4.3.7. Stabbed by a Movement that Prefers Killing to Dialogue

Marrouchi backs Mahfouz and *Children of the Alley*. , He lashes out at those who called for his death:

Mahfouz's stabbing highlights the total bankruptcy of a movement that prefers killing to dialogue, intolerance to debate, and paranoia to real politics. But it is hypocritical now to say of Mahfouz's assailants only that they are crude fanatics who have no respect for the intellectual or artistic expression, without at the same time noting that some of Mahfouz's work was already officially banned in Egypt itself. There is little basic distinction in the end between authorities who reserve the right for themselves to ban, imprison or otherwise punish writers who speak their minds and those fanatics who, for example, take to stabbing a famous author just because he seems to them to be an offense to their supposed idea of religion (2004, p. 226).

Philip Stewart also translated this novel and highlighted in his introduction its contradicting receptions in the East versus the West. He thinks that it is not often that preachers lead their flocks into the streets to shout for the banning of a novel hailed by many [in the West] as a masterpiece. He adds that Mahfouz faced the outcry of religious zealots, who unleashed their tempestuous fury at the "godlessness" of the work and its deviation from the Koranic story, and that in their outrage, some of them demanded that Mahfouz be brought to trial, asserting that his profane portrait of Prophet Muhammad verged on heresy (1981, p. 7).

4.3.8. Merely a Piece of Literature

Mahfouz himself tried to relate how he as a writer is essentially an artist who writes fiction. *Children of the Alley* is not against Islam, but rather a story that can be variously interpreted:

We have to accept *Awlad* as basically a system of symbols representing a certain interpretation of events, past and present. The human beings appearing in the surface story are not fundamentally different from the beasts of fables such as those of Aesop or for that matter, of Orwell's *Animal Farm* (Le Gassik, 1991, p. 108).

Similarly, Mahfouz himself asserted that *Children of the Alley* should be interpreted as a piece of literature:

I'd like to say that even *Children of Gebalaawi*, which was misunderstood by some people, did not deviate from this vision. The novel makes the point that the people who abandon religion, represented by Gebalaawi, and think they can rely only on science (represented by Arafa) and organize their life (represented by the lane) alone, discover that science without religion becomes a tool of evil and leads to the dictatorship of the ruler. It deprives them of their freedom, so they begin again to

search for Gebalaawi. The problem with this work from the beginning was that I wrote it as a novel and it was read by some as a book. A novel is a literary form that mixes reality and symbols. It is inevitably both real and imaginative (cited in Baker, 2003, p. 57).

4.4. Political Interpretation of *Children of the Alley*

According to Theroux in his article “Children of the Alley: A Translator’s Tale” (2001):

President Gamal Abdl al-Nasser hated the book for its harsh depiction of a society ruled by tyrants and goons, and wanted to ban it. In any case, al-Azhar University objected to the book and kept it out of print, sparing Nasser the trouble of doing so (Theroux, 2001, para. 5).

Similarly, Gordon interpreted the novel as a lust for political power and influence. The story deals with the injustices within humanity, some people of influence who try to control others, and dictators who suppress people in the interests of a thin layer of usurpers. Gordon writes:

Children of Gabalawi can certainly be regarded as an allegoric expression of despair at the ruthlessness and brutality of Egyptian regimes by a person who is in disharmony with rampant greed, the vile oppression, and the lust for power that trample underfoot the quest for justice and for true faith (1990, p. 34).

A possible reading is that Mahfouz refers to Gamal Abdel Nasser as Gabalawi. Nasser sought immortality and left a legacy as Gabalawi did. Nasser succeeded in establishing his own brand, gained power, a legacy in almost all Arab countries, and very well-known worldwide. Many Easterners adored Nasser who performed a one-man show. Like Gabalawi, Nasser was a very autocratic ruler, smashed and jailed all his opponents.

Gabalawi created the alley, set the tone, imposed his own rules, and decided on everything. Likewise, Nasser introduced the new Egypt after leading the 23rd July 1952 Revolution. Nasser crushed King Farouq, and sent him into exile. Gabalawi crushed Idris and sent him into exile. Both Idris and King Farouq had bad reputation and both were accused of spoiling the Hara (Egypt).

Moreover, Nasser had a very strong intelligence apparatus and propaganda machine. None was able to oppose Gabalawi or Nasser, none could have refused their orders. Nasser and Gabalawi were gradually isolated in their mansions. Gabalawi's thugs and Nasser's gangsters – Egypt's notorious State Security in the 1950s strongly supported Nasser and controlled the lives of people. Even the sudden and unexpected end of Gabalawi parallels Nasser's sudden and unexpected death. Mahfouz cleverly predicted the sudden, tragic death of the likes of Nasser who swept Egypt and the rest of the Arab world. Reactions to such sudden deaths were a blend of shock and disbelief. People of Hara (Egyptians) were in shock and disbelief when they heard the news of the end of Gabalawi (=Nasser).

Mahfouz tried to avoid any accusations of criticizing Nasser's regime. So he offered religious interpretation to claim precedence over his intended political one, and it is all up to the reader and the recipient to decide.

Lee Smith, a visiting professor at the Hudson Institute in Washington, D.C., pays tributes to Mahfouz's *Children of the Alley* and supports its political interpretation. He points out:

Fate left all that material in Mahfouz's path, but it was the politics that men make that cursed his beloved Egypt with military dictatorships and yet more tyranny. ...

Children of the Alley is Mahfouz's best book, better than the Bible and the Quran (Smith, 2006).

4.5. The Religious Register Fades Away in the English Translation

The *Oxford Dictionary*, defines the noun 'Register' as: "the linguistic code that is used in the creation of text that belongs to a 'genre'. In other words, register is the *signifiant* (e.g., the language used in a culinary recipe), 'genre' the *signifié* (the recipe itself)."

It may be useful to examine Mahfouz's view on the religious register of *Children of the Alley* through its translator into English. Peter Theroux met Naguib Mahfouz more than once and discussed with him this sensitive issue of religious allegory. Theroux says:

On more than one occasion, always in the company of Naguib's friends Ali Salem, Fathi Ashour, and Raymond, on the evenings of his *nadwahs*, I asked about the interpretation of the novel as a religious allegory. Mahfouz had little patience for his Islamist critics. He made two points: first, the book was a novel, a work of fiction, a story, it ought to be enjoyed as such, and readers were free to think of it as they chose. Second, his fanatical detractors had spun out their own interpretations of the book as a retelling of divine scripture, and then knocked down these straw men. "They spread those thoughts, I [Mahfouz] don't! They are condemning their own interpretations, their own ideas! They say these things, I don't!" he exclaimed (Theroux, 2001, para. 11).

Theroux sidelines the religious register in his translation of *Children of the Alley*. He tends to use domestication strategy For example, Gabalawi creates the alley, sets the tone and the rules of the Hara, imposes the "Ten Conditions of the Hara" that clearly hint at the "Ten

Commandments.” Gabalawi owns everything, religious interpretations manifests themselves through such aspects and qualifications.

For example, Mahfouz always refers to Gabalawi as الجبار (p. 11) في البيت كما هو الجبار في (p. 11) الخلاء, العظيم as on (p. 18) فشاعت في الوجه العظيم بشاشة (p. 18) and الكبير as on (p. 16) واكفهر الوجه الكبير (p. 16).

The Eastern reader – or any Muslim reader – simply associates “الجبار”, “العظيم”, and “الكبير” with the ninety-nine names of Allah – this is according the hadith in Sahih Muslim, “Abu Huraira reports that Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings Be Upon him) said, “There are ninety-nine names of Allah; he who commits them to memory would get into Paradise.” Hence the Eastern reader easily deduces that Gabalawi symbolizes God: the Creator, الجبار means The Compeller, العظيم means The Magnificent, and الكبير means The Great; all of them are clear references to God in Islam. Applying the values of the Eastern reader on Mahfouz’s choice of these words will result in the feelings of disapproval and anger - it is bizarre. Even Mahfouz’s usage of the definite article ‘ال’ in الجبار and not even simply the indefinite جبار is purposeful, it cannot be overlooked, it is a clear indication for the Eastern reader that Mahfouz specifically refers to Allah

However, Theroux translates الجبار into powerful:

(P. 11) الجبار في البيت كما هو الجبار في الخلاء

He **was** as **powerful** in this house as he was out in the open land (P. 9)

Theroux does not opt for “The Compeller,” he also uses the past tense, while Mahfouz uses the present tense. In terms of pragmatics, I think the past tense here indicates it is over and done with and is only a narration of a story, while Mahfouz’s present tense increases the awkward atmosphere surrounding Gabalawi’s presence at all times.

Both العظيم and الكبير are translated into *great*:

His great face darkened (P. 12)

Both العظيم and الكبير in Arabic indicate associations that are connected to them, the emotional suggestions related to Allah, they connote Allah, “The Magnificent” and “The Great,” but in the translation into English, we read:

The man’s **great** face beamed (p. 15)

The English rendering does not have the same effect on the Western reader as العظيم does on the Eastern recipient. Theroux does not preserve the tone of these adjectives attributed to Gabalawi. He purposely changes the color of the master discourse to adapt the Western concepts and psychology. Thus Theroux does not convey the inner meanings and effects of the ST, yet he manages to preserve the power of the story, attractive style and strong usage of language.

The ninety nine names and adjectives of Allah cannot be attributed to any human being since they exclusively belong to Allah. So Theroux is selective and his translation remains under the power of domestication. He decides on what meanings to be translated and how to convey them to the Western reader. This is in line with Venuti’s insights about translation:

Translation is thus an inevitable domestication, wherein the foreign text is inscribed with linguistic and cultural values that are intelligible to specific domestic constituencies. This process of inscription operates at every stage in the production, circulation, and reception of translation. It is initiated by the very choice of a foreign text to translate, always an exclusion of other foreign texts and literatures, which answers to particular domestic interests. It continues most forcefully in the development of a translation strategy that rewrites the foreign text in domestic dialects and discourses, always a choice of certain domestic values to the exclusion of others. And it is further complicated by the various forms in which the translation

is published, reviewed, read and taught, producing cultural and political effects that vary with different institutional contexts and social positions (cited in Faiq, 2004, p. 3)

The line of Adham's appointment as the heir to the alley is apparently the Quranic variant of the story of Prophet Adam. Clear differences emerge when we consider the way Mahfouz puts the line of the story in Arabic and how Theroux translates it. In the ST, Gabalawi says:

(p. 12) لقد وقع اختياري على اخيكم آدم ليدبر الوقف تحت إشرافي

Theroux translates it into:

I have chosen your brother Adham to look after the property under my supervision. (P. 10).

Easterners can clearly see the reference to Quranic verse 30, Surah Al-Baqarah:

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا
أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَن يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَآءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ
بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

Translated by Al-Hilali & Khan as:

And (remember) when your Lord said to the angels: "Verily, I am going to place (mankind) generations after generations on earth." They said: "Will You place therein those who will make mischief therein and shed blood, - while we glorify You with praises and thanks

(Exalted be You above all that they associate with You as partners) and sanctify You." He (Allah) said: "I know that which you do not know" (Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 30).

Can a Westerner grasp this similarity and notice this reference? I think the answer is a very likely no. Such a reader cannot do so because Mahfouz's choice of the word الوقف is done on purpose to deliver certain religious interpretations because الوقف means, according to the definition derived from the General Authority of Islamic Affairs and Endowments in Dubai, to stop, contain, or preserve. الوقف / waqf refers to a religious endowment, i.e., a voluntary and irrevocable dedication of one's wealth or a portion of it - in cash or kind (such as a house or a garden) - and its disbursement for Sharia compliant projects (such as mosques or religious schools, etc). Waqf is a permanent donation. Once a waqf is created, it can never be donated as a gift, inherited, or sold. Disbursement of its returns is done in accordance with the endower's wishes. Theroux uses "property," which is, according to *Cambridge dictionary*, (1) An object or objects that belong to someone, (2) A building or area of land, or both together, and (3) The legal right [Not religious right] to own and use something.

None of these three meanings or definitions can carry any religious connotations or even point to any kind of interpretation that can be related to religion. So Theroux does not impose the ethics and values of the Eastern culture on the Western reader. He cleverly addresses the problems of the ST, which includes cultural, religious issues that are vastly different from those of the Western communities, where dashing faiths, beliefs and such practices are tolerated or even supported under what is called "freedom of expression".

Summary

This chapter has explored the main points relating to the Western reception of *Children of the Alley*. As explained, the reasons why Western recipients can accept *Children of the Alley* rest primarily on the domesticating strategy used translating the novel into English. The next and final chapter concludes the thesis.

Chapter 5: CONCLUSION

It is supposed that the response of both recipients of the ST and its translation should be the same. However, differences in the way people react to the same stimulus may happen. This is the case with *Children of the Alley*. The ability of human beings to respond to any literary work emanate from what may be called the circles they are brought up in, i.e., reception theory. These circles include the level of education, set of religious beliefs, principles, customs and traditions, the extent of adherence to social identity, individuality or group affiliations as well as anything that comes under the notion of culture.

Children of the Alley is a really interesting literary work. The writer was born in Egypt, targeted the Eastern recipient but the reaction to أولاد حارتنا in the East was not as the author anticipated. The East received it negatively to the point when an angry young man decided to react violently to this stimulus and stabbed Mahfouz in the neck in 1994. When Mahfouz tried to break the referred to circles and marginalize the Eastern identity, he paid a very heavy price, and was about to lose his life.

This is in contradiction to the Western reception of *Children of the Alley*. Mahfouz is not a Westerner by origin, yet he willingly adopted Western ideologies and cultural views. As this thesis has discussed, it can be understood why he is the most translated and read Arab novelist in the West and consequently why he is the one and only Arab novelist to win the Nobel Prize for literature in spite of the fact that the Arabs have many other great novelists and writers.

This thesis has explored how Mahfouz helped Theroux immeasurably by writing a novel that could belong to the West more than it does to the East. Theroux was smartly able to reflect the spirit and the thoughts in the novel and to retain the interesting style and flow of writing. There are two scenarios that can be deduced from Theroux's rendering. The first, the one I personally support, is that he was fully aware of the gaps and he purposely translated the novel in a way that mitigated the religious atmosphere. Given his knowledge of both cultures, he was able to avoid clashes with religious scholars. The second scenario is that he carried out his translation without due attention to the points and obstacles referred to under the first scenario. He simply produced a rendering that was accepted and commended by Western readers and critics.

More specifically, this thesis has examined the reasons of this dichotomy of one text, but two receptions. It has provided examples from the ST أولاد حارتنا and the TT *Children of the Alley* that support the argument. The thesis has investigated the ability of the translator to provide a rendering that changed the direction of the text and provided a new understanding that is accepted in the West.

In this thesis, chapter one introduced the study and presented in brief a description of the two receptions. Chapter two examined the pertinent theoretical background of this thesis, including the theory of reception, signifier and signified, the meaning of translation, and the meaning of culture and representation of Arabic literature in the West. Chapter three explored the Eastern reception of the novel by offering representative opinions of Eastern intellectuals and provided some religious interpretation. Chapter four examined the Western reception of the novel by providing information about the translator, Peter Theroux, and

examining his English rendering in the context of some opinions of Western scholars and writers. Religious interpretations seem and to a large extent to have faded away in the English text. Naturally, there is more to explore in this area. For example, whether the case of *Children of the Alley* is unique or is it only an instance of a trend that can be tracked in other works by Mahfouz or any other Arab writer, and how far can manipulation go without affecting reception through translation?

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Vita

Muhammad Ismail Muhammad Ismail Omar Ghorab is an Egyptian born in 1980. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in 2001 from Alexandria University, English Department. He has worked as translator/interpreter for nine years before joining the American University of Sharjah (AUS) in 2010 to follow his graduate studies for the MA in Translation and Interpreting.